Clarion Review

General

A Kaleidoscope for June
Antoinette Tryssenaar Villa
978-1-4343-3559-3
Four Stars (out of Five)

“I got this diary for my birthday today and I’m so happy because now I can write and tell you things I can’t tell anyone else.” Wilhelmina (so named in honor of the Dutch Queen) Velthuizen is a young girl who while still a baby moved with her family from the Netherlands to a farm in rural Ontario Canada. She hates her name her white-blond hair (including her eyebrows and eyelashes) and the fact that she’s called “Willy” a boy’s name in Canada. Her diary paints a vivid and engaging picture of rural life in the 1950s for readers who remember those days while illuminating the era for those who seek deeper understanding of life in that time.

Willy’s father was a baker in the Netherlands and in Canada he farms and supplements his income with factory work as do most of his neighbors. The Velthuizen children and their friends attend a one-room schoolhouse and their days are filled with school farm and household chores community activities and church. Although Willy’s life might appear idyllic by modern standards the incipient seeds of rebellion against her authoritarian parents can be felt as Willy approaches her teen years. Her father’s all-too-frequent “No and that’s that!” fuels her inquiring mind to seek ways to take a stand for her own growing individual spirit. Never really feeling loved by her parents Willy finds it easier to confide her coming-of-age experiences to the bride doll she was given at a factory Christmas party. Naming the doll “June” Willy shares everything with her secretly writing in her diary in one of her “aloneness places” a space under her bed.

Young Willy who loves reading and is beginning to show a great deal of talent as a writer is obsessed with cataloging and understanding the qualities of various colors hence the “kaleidoscope” in the book’s title. Her ability to discriminate and describe fine nuances in the colors she sees is applied to vivid descriptions of her life and activities as well as to her need to understand her parents siblings friends and neighbors. All is not peace and light in young Willy’s life; traumatic events are recorded with the sympathy and awareness typical of a young person just learning to see beyond the surface appearance of the lives of others. When a tragic

farm accident results in two gruesome deaths Willy must face questions and the answers will define the woman she will soon become.

Author Antoinette Tryssenaar Villa also began her education in a one-room schoolhouse in Canada and later graduated Magna Cum Laude from both St. Mary's University in Halifax Nova Scotia and Old Dominion University in Norfolk Virginia. She currently resides in the state of Washington where she is a teacher. *A Kaleidoscope for June* will be enjoyed by young teen readers as well as by their parents and grandparents; the insight it offers into the youth of rural baby boomers can help open the doors to intergenerational storytelling in readers' own families.